Realistic Information System for Effective Awareness of Agri-Initiatives

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is the mainstay of the Indian economy as nearly 70 percent of its population derives livelihood from agriculture. It has several hot spots of rural poverty, as most farmers in the region are smallholders with diverse farming systems, which are highly risk prone. Annually reducing and drastically insufficient monsoon has created a sense of urgency to pay more attention to agriculture and food security. The Government has initiated several major schemes which will have long-term impact. The short terms initiatives are mainly are in the form of agricultural loans and these are aimed to directly assist the poor farmers. Apart from this, there are various initiatives aiming agricultural infrastructure development as the subsidy based regime is no longer sustainable. In spite of all above initiatives, it has been observed that still large population is below poverty line. The slowdown in agricultural growth has become a major cause for concern. Hence a realistic information system is required which can penetrate to the grass-route level. Realistic Information System development can bring the knowledge revolution in the agricultural information system. A holistic approach including all the stake-holders viz. Government, researchers Banks & Credit societies, Real Time info about market, Current & Future demand, price trends, weather, soil conservation is depicted in this research paper.

This paper attempts to develop realistic e-information system which can help to percolate all government initiatives to the end users at grass root level and real implementation of all the initiatives can be fostered. This will help to extend the capability of the farmers and connect farming and rural communities in India to global information sources and markets as well.

Key words: Agri-initiatives, long-term impact, National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) , soil conservation, realistic e-information system .

Introduction

Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of India as nearly 70 percent of its population derives livelihood from agriculture. It has several hot spots of rural poverty, as most farmers in the region are smallholders with diverse farming systems, which are highly risk prone. Annually reducing and drastically insufficient monsoon has created a sense of urgency to pay more attention to agriculture and food security. Although agriculture contributes only 21% of India's GDP, its importance in the country's economic, social, and political era goes well beyond this indicator. The rural areas are still home to some 72 percent of the India's 1.1 billion people, a large number of whom are poor. Well aware of the fact, Government has already been taking the short term agricultural initiatives on high priority. In parallel, long-term strategies remain very important. These strategies have been given higher weight age the 11th Five Year Plan, as in every five year plan, creating green revolution and are aimed at giving a strong base to Indian agriculture. The Government has initiated several major schemes which will have long-term impact. The short terms initiatives are mainly in the form of agricultural loans and these are aimed to directly assist the poor farmers. These can be classified as follows:

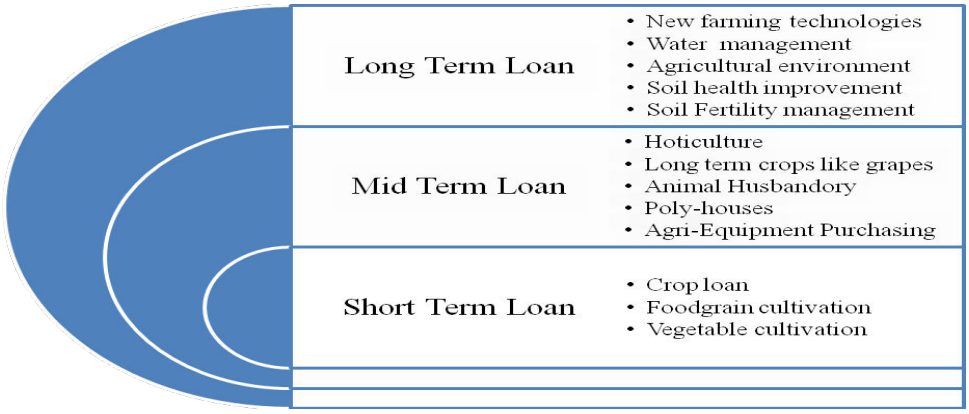

Figure 1 : Several major schemes initiated by Government

To provide benefits to the farmer community, the Ministry of Agriculture has launched the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) during the Financial Year 2007-08 to encourage the States to invest more towards agriculture and allied sectors so as to achieve 4% annual growth. This would help in increasing the production and productivity. The Ministry has envisaged an outlay of Rs.25, 000/- corer for the 11th Five Year Plan. Some of the major activities for which the scheme is available are integrated development of food crops, agriculture mechanization, soil health and productivity, horticulture, animal husbandry, dairying & Fisheries and development of market infrastructure. Apart from this, there are various initiatives aiming agricultural infrastructure development as the subsidy based regime

is no longer sustainable. Indian Council of Agricultural Research – National Agricultural Innovation Project (NAIP) is to facilitate accelerated and sustainable transformation of Indian agriculture in support of poverty alleviation and income generation by collaborative development and application of agricultural innovation by the public research organizations in partnership with the farmer's groups, the private sector, the civil society organizations and other stakeholders. The World Bank is facilitating various projects in Agricultural sector some of those are listed below:

India: ICDS Systems Strengthening & Nutrition Improvement Program (ISSNIP),Karnataka Watershed Development IIIN: Development Policy Loan (DPL) to Promote Inclusive Green Growth and Sustainable Development in Himachal Pradesh, Enhancing Capacity for NAP alignment and Reporting to UNCCD Secretariat - India,Strengthening the Enabling Environment for Biodiversity Conservation and Management in India, Bihar Rural Livelihood Project Additional Financing, Rajasthan Agricultural Competitiveness Project, India Secondary Education Project, National Dairy Support Project

Table 1: Project approval information

Project ID	Commitment Amount	Status	Approval Date
P130616	61.7	Active	October 25, 2012
P102627	84.0	Active	September 27, 2012
P130395	70.0	Active	September 27, 2012
P130944	37.0	Active	September 27, 2012
P121731	106.0	Active	September 6, 2012
P122486	60.0	Active	September 6, 2012
P124041	100.0	Active	September 6, 2012
P129603	0.15	Active	July 12, 2012
P128634	0.27	Active	June 29, 2012
P130546	100.0	Active	May 31, 2012
P124614	109.0	Active	March 27, 2012
P118445	500.0	Active	March 22, 2012
P107648	352.0	Active	March 15, 2012

The new information and communication technology (ICT) is playing a significant role in rural development by empowering the rural farmers with new knowledge, up-to-date information and entrepreneurship skills. Some private sector initiatives have also come up to link the rural economies with mainstream markets using ICT, however the primary motivation behind these initiatives is the facilitation of commercial transactions in rural areas rather than knowledge and/or technology dissemination.

Issues & Challenges

In spite of all above initiatives, it has been observed that still large population is below poverty line. Reasons for this are many. The high level of illiteracy and thereby very poor awareness about Government initiatives and schemes, in most rural areas of the country, is

major hurdle.However, the print media like newspaper agencies e.g. Agree is one of the prominent source of Agricultural update informational sector and reference e-books are promote to awareness of the agricultural government schemes for the farmers.

The traditional agricultural market system is still dominated by the commodity traders or so called “middle men”. Restrictions on the movement of the produce across state or provincial boundaries also work against the farmers. Most often farmers feel helpless against themarket forces manipulated by these intermediaries and get a price fortheir produce at marginal profits and sometimes at a loss. Farmers have poor access to support services such as extension and theagricultural markets, knowledge, technology and financial credit.Thetraditional mechanisms for transfer of technology and implementationof extension programs, usually government administered, are either slowor ineffective in connecting the resource-poor farmers with up-to-dateknowledge from researchers and markets for their produce. This is primarily due to rising costs of such interventions, declining public fundsfor rural extension, and inadequate exploitation of new means ofknowledge and information dissemination by responsible governmentagencies. Other constraints include lack of infrastructure and education in rural areas where majority of farmers live and work Sustained, although much slower, agricultural growth in the 1990s reduced rural poverty to 26.3 percent by 1999/00. Since then, however, the slowdown in agricultural growth has become a major cause for concern. The Government of India places high priority on reducing poverty by raising agricultural productivity. However, bold action from policymakers will be required to shift away from the existing subsidy-based regime that is no longer sustainable, to build a solid foundation for a highly productive, internationally competitive, and diversified agricultural sector.

Way Ahead

The prime task is to increase the literacy among the farmer community. Through this, spreading awareness about all Government initiatives among the masses and creating awareness about these initiatives and schemes is the daunting task. Further, awareness about profit being eaten by the traders or middle men, will unite the farmers and then direct farmer-consumer can be established. hugh there exists some information and communication systems, those are not able to cater the needs and hence a realistic information system is required which can penetrate to the grass-route level.

Realistic Information System development can bring the knowledge revolution in the agricultural information system. A holistic approach including all the stake-holders viz. Government, researchers Banks & Credit societies, Real Time info about market, Current &

Future demand, price trends, weather, soil conservation. The conceptual framework is depicted as follows:

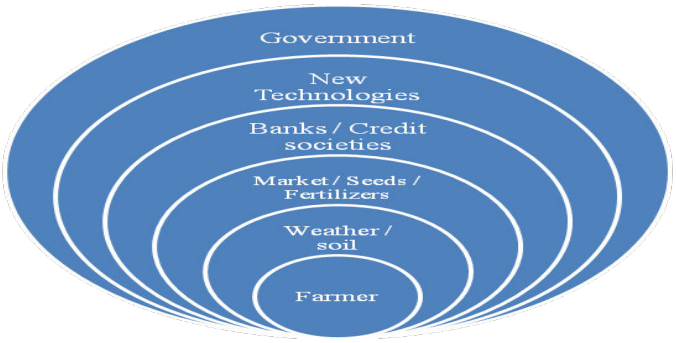

Figure 2: Holistic Approach – A Conceptual Framework

For effective implementation of any scheme, a particular process has to be followed. Most of the times, the end users are unaware of the process which encourages middle men. To avoid this, aFlow chart for every activity in any scheme with all minute details should be prepared and displayed so that dependency of farmers on the officials or the mediators can be restricted. This will foster the speed of the process and save the cost of middle men. Once the system is improved, it will automatically encourage more and more farmers to come forward to avail the benefits of the schemes.

Mobile – Government has already invested good amount on infrastructure development of cellular network. Further it is offering cellular connectivity to all at nominal cost. There are exclusive 'Kisan Cards' for the farmers. Taking this initiative forward, free internet, only for agricultural web-sites can be offered. All the agricultural schemes will be visible to all the farmers in regional language. Secondly, all the document list can be made available on that web-site itself. Through this further, real time information about the current market rates, current and future demand, weather forecasts, natural calamities, technological advancements, best practices, consumer preference etc. all agri-related information can be shared. It will be a unique initiative of its kind and the fruits will be visible in no time. Extending further, online Chat room can be formed where farmers, consumers, agricultural researchers and experts, Government officials can interact. Expert advice, contact to govt. officials, Tahasil office etc. will be very convenient and quick.

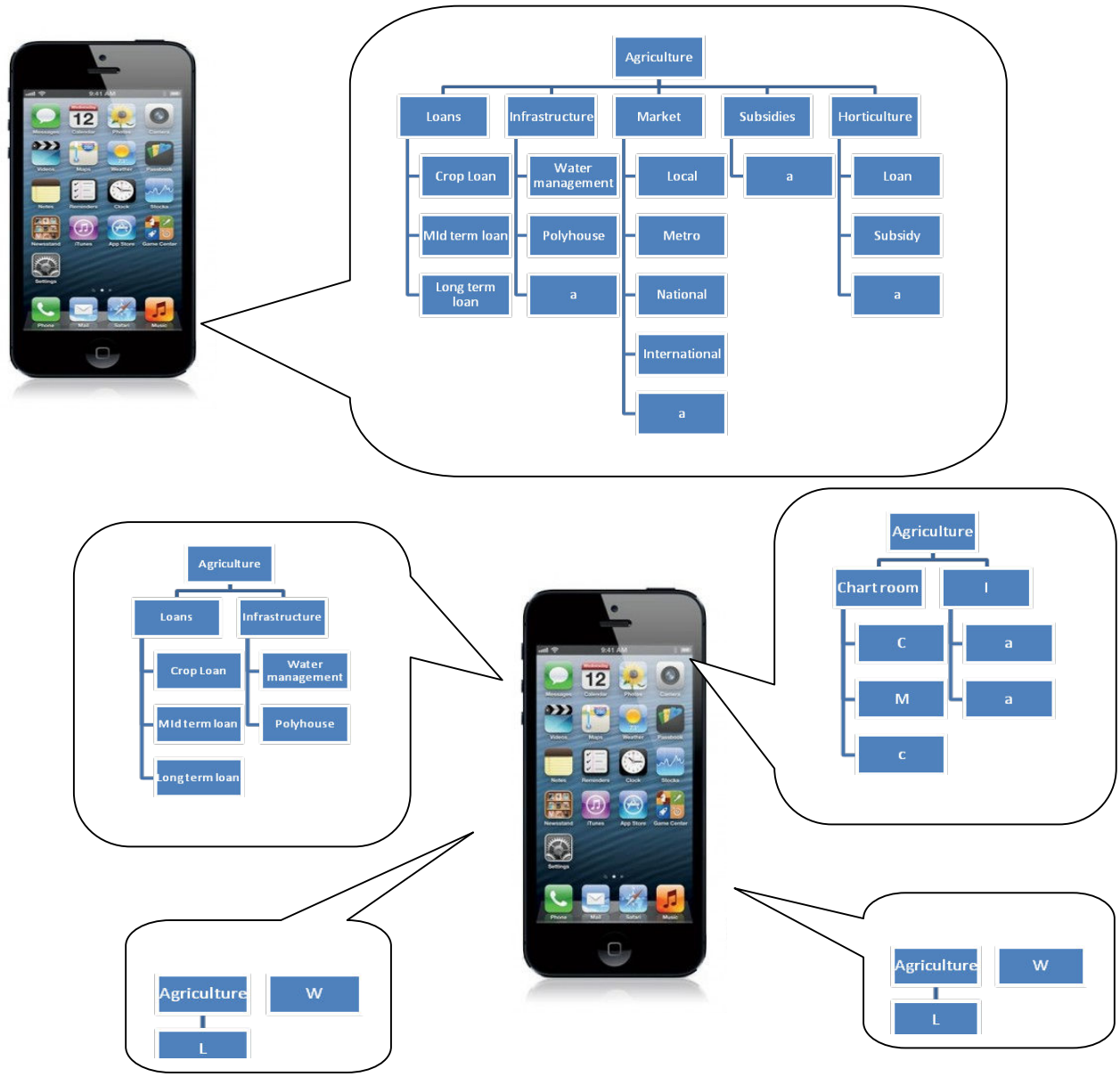

Figure 3: Expert advice contact

Kisan cards to farmers already distributed, that database is already available. So this database can be effectively used to connect farmers with related SMS in regional language. Any new scheme can be introduced via SMS and all regular schemes, like Crop loan, can be reminded at appropriate time.

Radio, particularly FM channels are again popular. So radio can be effectively utilized for mass communication for all relevant schemes at the particular point of time.All related information along with procedure and documents required, important dates can be published in local news papers. For various subsidies like LPG, kerosene etc, already everyone is required to open a saving account in nationalized bank, same account can be utilized for agricultural subsidies.

Conclusion

The Government has initiated several major schemes which will have long-term impact. The short term initiatives are mainly are in the form of agricultural loans and these are aimed to directly assist the poor farmers. Apart from this, there are various initiatives aiming agricultural infrastructure development as the subsidy based regime is no longer sustainable.

In spite of all above initiatives, it has been observed that still high population is below poverty line. The slowdown in agricultural growth has become a major cause for concern.

Hence a realistic information system is required which can penetrate to the grass-route level. Realistic Information System development can bring the knowledge revolution in the agricultural information system. A holistic approach will be including all the stake-holders viz. Government, researchers Banks & Credit societies, Real Time info about market, Current & Future demand, price trends, weather, soil conservation.

The conceptual framework is depicted.This will help to extend the capability of farmers & connect farming and rural communities in India to global information sources and markets as well.

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